

State

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of State

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SECRET SECURITY INFORMATION

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TO: Secretary of State

NO: 518, September 12, 2 p.m.

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SENT DEPT 518; POUCHED PARIS, LONDON, TEL AVIV, CAIRO, DAMASCUS, BAGHDAD, AMMAN, JIDDA.

Moslem-Christian rivalry, which permeates very foundations of Lebanese state, has been heightened as result recent polit developments. One Arab diplomat has even gone so far as predict coup d'etat precipitated by flare-up Moslem-Christian emotions.

In his "A-bomb" speech to Parl, which is familiar to almost everyone even though banned from publication, Solh publicly accused Khouri regime of murdering former PRIMIN Riadh Solh, a Moslem hero. Khouri sometime ago privately told Emb that it was to obviate this very charge that Sami Solh, Riadh's cousin, was installed as PRIMIN and retained as long as he was. His summary dismissal, under bitter conditions, has more than destroyed good-will Khouri had hoped to gain from Moslem community by this maneuver.

Henri Pharaon's vitriolic outbursts against Solh in Parl Tues and Solh's bitter retorts have been placed within framework of Christian versus Moslem conflict. Since Tues, Solh has been discussing with ex-PRIMIN Abdulla Yafi and other powerful Moslem polit leaders possible vindictive measures. They may, for example, join in a general strike now (rpt now) being plotted by Jumblatt's opposition front, ultimate objective of which is to overthrow Pres Khouri.

Unconfirmed reports say Col Shishikli phoned Solh congratulating him for his Tues performance. Solh and opposition leaders are reported visiting Shishikli next week.

Meanwhile, Mufti of Jerusalem, who is spending summer in Leb, and Iran's Mullar Kashani, who arrived yesterday for four-day visit, are not (rpt not) considered incapable of lending their ingenuities to an upsurge of Moslem fanaticism, if it materializes.

While situation is dangerous I do not (rpt not) believe it has reached crucial point. Grand Mufti of Lebanon, with whom subj was discussed, pointed out that gnashing of teeth was on part of politicians and expressed confidence that confessional bitterness has not (rpt not) and will not (rpt not) reach rank and file of citizenry.

MINOR

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